EDU 221

Spring 2013

Curriculum Instruction Assessment (CIA)

UbD/MI Reflections – Chapters 8 & 8, 11, 12

While these chapters differed in terms of content, one theme did stand out – balance. Teachers need to find a way to balance many aspects of their diverse classrooms. In particular, teacher must balance the requirement to assign students with a standardized grade, while still remaining true to the UbD and DI models which favor a more holistic approach. The authors solution to the disequilibrium through a “multipart” (Tomlinson & McTighe, p134) system involving grades based on student achievement against the desired learning outcomes and standards, a grade reflecting personal progress, and comprehensive reporting system that takes into account student work habits. A balance must also be struck between the teacher’s classroom expectations and the MI’s of his or her students. Teachers must determine the right combination of classroom management practices in order to achieve their desired results, whether this be student attention, smooth transitioning from one activity to another, explanation of class rules, or dealing with individual behaviors. MI theory recommends a multi-faceted approach that reflects all eight MI’s. For example: if an individual student, whose most present intelligence is Bodily-Kinesthetic, is acting aggressively, the teacher could “role-play aggressive behavior and try out alternatives” (Armstrong, p118). Students must also take a balanced approach when working with students with disabilities. Too often the scales are shifted and the focus is put on the disabilities of the student, instead of the abilities of the student. We are reminded that, more often than not, the list of things a student with a disability cannot do is far shorter than the list of things they can do. MI theory provides teachers with a great way to find an alternate path, directed at student abilities, through their intelligences not impacted by their disability. Finally, educators must strike a balance between what we want students to learn, and how we present the information. MI theory argues that not only are the eight facets intelligences, they are also memories. If we want students to do more than memorize, we must support and develop their cognitive abilities by aligning the content with the students multiple intelligences.

Creating balance is not an easy task; luckily, the four chapters provide multiple useful examples on how to achieve this balance in each area. I was really intrigued by the idea that effective grading should look like a “photo album” (Tomlinson & McTighe, p135) rather than a single “snapshot.” I have definitely had experiences where much of my final grade hinged on a single test. Simply knowing that this was a high-stakes test affected my performance. These test, particularly in math, failed to take into account my personal progress or my math anxiety. The UbD authors suggestions are great, but sadly require huge grading and reporting reform before they could be implemented. I for one would support such a change. Armstrong’s comments about MI theory and its positive implications for meeting the needs of students with disabilities were extremely helpful. After taking SED101, I became much better acquainted with the role of special education and the part I will play as a teacher. The beauty of MI theory, in regards to special education, is that “the best learning activities for special needs students are those that are most successful with all students” (Armstrong, p154).